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March 2, 2011

Joe Gannon

I want to thank the committee for taking the time to hear my testimony. My name is Joe Gannon. I work for the Department of Developmental Services with the State of Connecticut. I've been employed by the department for over 20 years. I strongly believe in the mission statement of the department and have dedicated my work life to uphold this statement. However, over the last 10 years in my opinion the department has veered drastically from its responsibility to provide continued services for Connecticut's citizens and families with developmental disabilities. Starting in 2003 when they privatized 30 state run group homes and continuing over the last 3 years when they have stopped admissions to state group homes for those in need of services. Now the department wants to close 4 group homes from the last budget and another 5 from this one. Over the last 3 years alone the Department has closed or slated to close, 15 group homes for residents with developmental disabilities. When you consider each home housed 6-8 residents that is the permanent removal of 90-120 beds for those in need. As the private sector continues to be underfunded or unable to care for the most challenging individuals with developmental disabilities, the State is ending opportunities for families to receive much needed placement and services.

As a respite Developmental Services Worker with DDS, I work with individuals and families whom only have limited services from the State of Connecticut. Many of these people only receive a few weeks a year of respite services and are still waiting for placement in either the State or the private sector. Many of them will never get placement in the private sector because their loved one is too challenging. This budget's reduction at another 5 DDS group homes yet again lessens the chances these families will ever receive the services they desperately need. This is not the mission statement of the Department or the State of Connecticut I believe I uphold and I implore this committee to stop the elimination of State DDS services for those that desperately need them.

Thank You.